

WychWood Audionics

F3 filter system



THE BENEFITS OF effective mains treatment on the performance of a system are widely acknowledged to be worthwhile and, depending on what other activity is going on around you, can be more effective than a number of other upgrades. One of the biggest issues of mains filters is separating the effective from the decorative. While some products are extremely capable, others are simply dressed up bits of standard mains paraphernalia or worse still, not actually certified for use in their supposed role.

Enter WychWood Audionics and its range of F3 filters. Born from the rather merciless environment of internet hi-fi forums, F3 is a compacted reference to 'Foo-Free Filter.' Foo in this instance refers to marketing pseudoscience and to this end the F3 series is designed to avoid anything that might be seen as remotely foo-ish. That said, the principles that the system works under differ to the norm.

Protect yourself

The core of a F3 system is a main power strip. This takes the form of a F3 gantry in the shape of the eight-way F3 Prime for £189 or six-way F3 Lite for £149. Both are built around a bespoke two-stage RFI/EMI filtration system and 3.5kW of total power output, but the Prime adds a 16A RCBO circuit breaker, which gives nigh-on instantaneous trip protection and enormous potential current and surge protection. Both units are fitted with an IEC socket allowing you to choose the length and type of cable you need for your system.

Where the F3 series deviates from the norm is that in addition to the

main filter, you can add a second layer of filtration in the form of a F3 Micro. This is a single plug filter that sits between the Prime or Lite and a specific piece of equipment. This serves two functions. For devices that are potentially very sensitive to mains-borne interference – such as phono stages or preamplifiers – you can add an extra layer of filtration, but additionally if you have an electrically noisy piece of equipment connected to the F3, the Micro serves to prevent any nastiness making it back onto the main filter. This keeps the initial costs down, but allows for additional protection as and when you need it or can afford it.

None of the gain in refinement comes at the expense of dynamics or energy

The enclosures are aluminium and are finished to an extremely high standard with damped rubber feet for isolation and good-quality sockets. The asking price also includes a full clutch of relevant safety certification, which means that none of the hoped for boost in performance comes at the cost of reduced safety.

The F3 system has a fairly stiff initial test in that the mains treatment that it replaces for the review is IsoTek's mighty Evo 3 Sigmas (HFC 394) at roughly seven times the price of a F3 prime and a threesome of F3 Micros. The WychWood can't quite manage the exceptional drop in noise floor and general sense of effortlessness that the IsoTek can, but it produces an exceptionally capable performance for the price. Compared with any

conventional eight-way socket, there is an immediate and appreciable improvement to the separation between instruments and a reduction in overall noise levels.

The other area where it has an advantage over many similarly priced rivals is that none of this gain in refinement comes at the expense of dynamics or energy, which can occur when a mains treatment system lacks the required current delivery or has been smoothed to within an inch of its life. There is plenty of bass impact and none of the timing or sense of attack that the Naim review system excels at is blunted or removed by the F3 being in situ.

The power and the glory

The F3 Micro filters are generally effective when used selectively too. With the external XP5 XS power supply I use with the Supernait 2, the gains are slight, but the Avid Pellar phono stage and Ingenium turntable both benefit. Indeed pretty much the only black mark against the WychWood is that the F3 Micro switches from useful to compulsory when a Rega RP3 turntable is substituted as it generates a ground hum when connected to the Prime that vanishes with the Micro for reasons I'm not completely clear on.

Mains treatment is a highly contested product category, but this is a very clever and well thought out product that delivers on the promise of improved performance at a very competitive price. If you want an extremely capable and flexible mains treatment solution and you don't want to spend a fortune, this is by some margin the most effective solution I have seen. **ES**

DETAILS

PRICE

From £149

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WEBSITE

evoaudio.uk/
wychwood.htm

OUR VERDICT

